

# *Employers and new fathers: the role of extra-statutory occupational benefits in enabling shared parenting in the UK*

Trondheim, September 2015

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# Statutory leave policies remain UK wide



# The role of occupational benefits in welfare in the UK

- Unemployment and income protection (Clasen & Koslowski, 2013, Journal of Social Policy)
- Pensions (Meyer, T)
- Sickness pay (Clasen, forthcoming)
- Family benefits

# Research questions

1. What entitlements and flexible working arrangements do fathers have access to in their workplace – both statutory and extra-statutory?
2. Which entitlements do fathers make use of?
3. Why is there a gap between entitlement and uptake? (What is the role of extra-statutory occupational benefit in enabling shared parenting?)

# Data and methods

A mixed methods study:

- a) Two large-scale datasets: the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) and Growing Up in Scotland (GUS).
- b) 20 in-depth interviews with fathers who:  
reside in Scotland, employed by a public sector organisation, have at least one child under the age of 5 years, live in a dual-income household wherein the partner is also at work.
- c) An employer survey of extra-statutory benefits  
<http://www.topemployersforworkingfamilies.org.uk/index.php/scottish-special-awards>

# Growing inventory of work-related family friendly policies

- Some policies are gendered by design
- Some are gender-neutral by design/label (if not by implementation or take up)
- Some statutory,
- Some non-statutory

# Aims of UK statutory policy

1. To get more parents (mothers!) into paid work in order to diminish child poverty;
2. To enable every child to have “*the best start in life*” – child well-being
3. To achieve greater equality in the labour market outcomes of mothers and fathers

# Aims of employer specific non-statutory policies

- Primarily economic drivers
  - To increase employee engagement
  - To reduce employee stress – improving their productivity
  - As part of the package offered alongside salary and other occupational benefits – improved staff retention
- Corporate specific culture & values also important

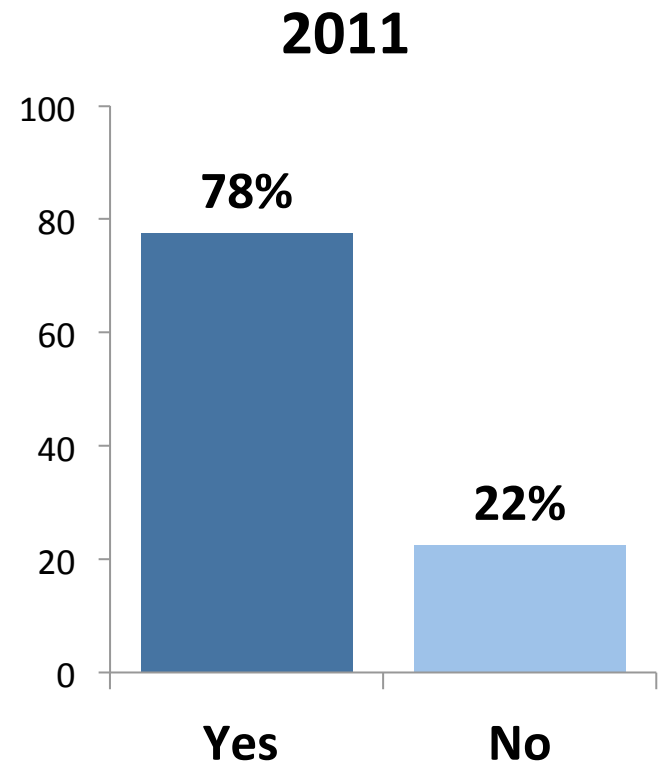
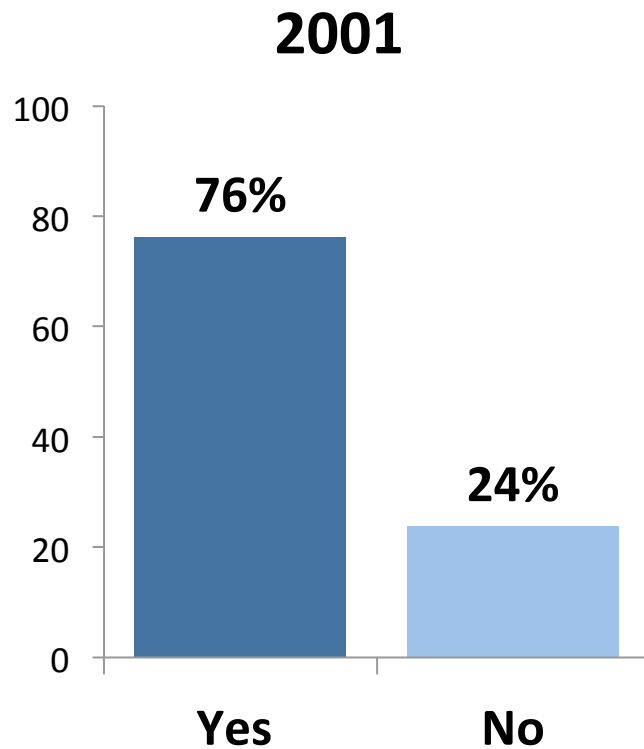


# Statutory benefits available to UK fathers in 2015

- Paternity Leave
  - A 2-week statutory non-transferable paid leave at £138.18 per week, or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower, for working partners, to be taken soon after (within 56 days) the birth of a child
- Annual Leave
  - Almost all workers are legally entitled to 5.6 weeks a year of paid time off from work

# Post birth leave uptake by fathers in Scotland

% of fathers who took leave (any) after the birth of their child



# For comparison – maternity leave

- Statutory Maternity Pay
  - Is paid for up to 39 weeks. You get:
  - 90% of your average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first 6 weeks
  - £139.58 or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks
  - You may remain on leave unpaid for another 13 weeks
  - You must take 2 weeks leave (or 4 weeks if you work in a factory)

# Additional paternity leave

- Before the introduction of shared parental leave in April 2015, fathers could take APL for between 2 and 26 weeks, starting 20 weeks after the birth and before the child's first birthday, instead of the parents making use of the maternity entitlement. APL was paid at £138.18 per week, whichever is lower, for up to 19 weeks, if the APL started 20 weeks after the birth and the mother makes no further claim on maternity pay from 20 weeks

# New legislation: Shared parental leave (SPL)



Both parents take 25 weeks at the same time.



Mum takes 44 weeks, Dad takes the first 6 weeks at the same time.

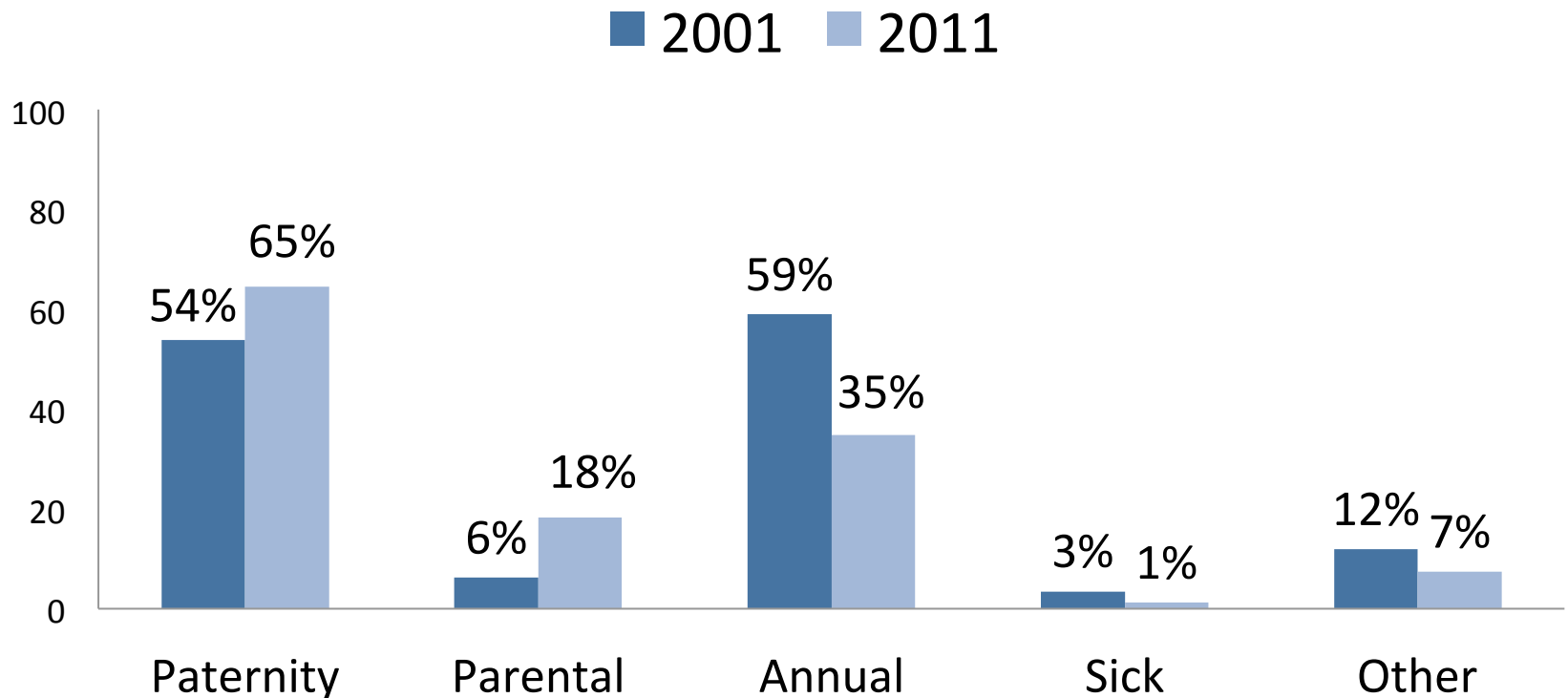


Mum takes the first 12 weeks, then Dad takes the remaining 38 weeks.

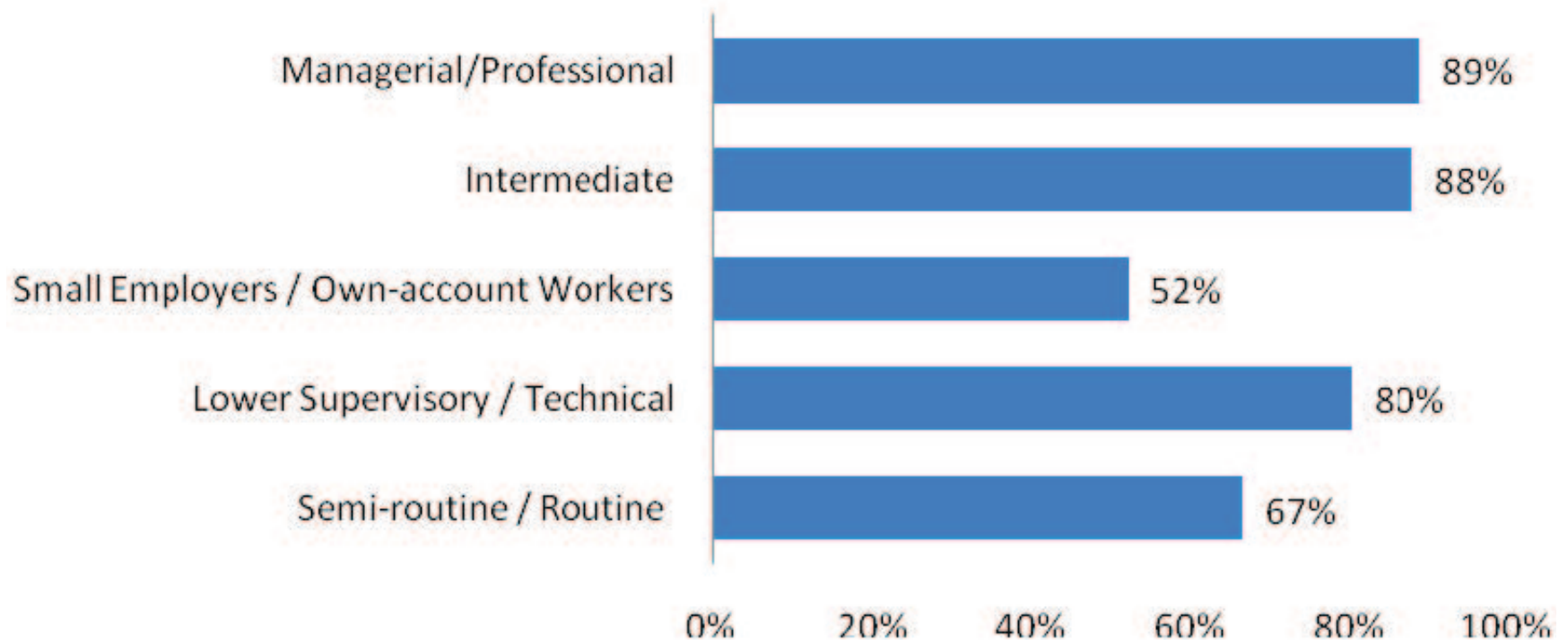
Start planning your **#sharedparentalleave** at [www.gov.uk/sharedparentalleave](http://www.gov.uk/sharedparentalleave)

# Post birth leave uptake by fathers in Scotland

% of fathers who took leave after their child was born, by leave type



**Figure 11: Percentage of fathers who took leave (any type) after their child was born, by occupational status (n=4,698, GUS-BC2, 2011)**



# Other statutory entitlements

- Parental Leave
  - An 18-week statutory unpaid leave reserved for each working parent, to be taken from soon after the birth of a child and up to the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (this was changed from up to the child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday in April 2015)
- Leave for antenatal appointments
  - Unpaid leave for 2 appointments (6.5 hours per appointment)



# Flexible working arrangements

- All eligible (after 26 weeks employment) employees have the right to request flexible working arrangements such as home-working, agile working, flexi-time, compressed hours, job-sharing, part-time working, specific shifts and other options
- Requests must be considered within 3 months
- Employers must have a sound business reason for rejecting the request

# Extra-statutory leave benefits

- Occupational paternity pay – pay in excess of the £139.58 pr week. Most often, full pay for 2 weeks, or for 1 week.
- Occupational maternity pay – varies, but again full or half pay for 4 – 6 months not uncommon
- Paid emergency leave and paid or unpaid non-emergency special leave
- Shared parental leave??

# Key Findings: Fathers' views on taking post birth leave

## **Perceived benefits of taking leave soon after childbirth:**

- Supports the mother
- Coping with the challenges involved with welcoming a new baby
- Celebrates the “new arrival”
- Early bonds with the baby
- Attention to older siblings

## **Perceived drawbacks:**

- Short
- Loss of earnings

## **Mixed opinions regarding the new SPL scheme**

# Key Findings: Fathers' views on using flexible working arrangements

## **Perceived benefits**

- Using flexi-time and compressed hours, enables them to be more engaged employees
- Flexible working arrangements were an important part of the package offered to them by employers, to be favourably considered alongside salary and other occupational benefits

## **Perceived caveats**

- Not so readily available for those working in SMEs and those on low incomes
- Dependent on having a supportive and informed line-manager

*“The flexibility afforded here helps me feel that I’m not a father that doesn’t see his children... I am a 7-day-a-week dad, not just a 2-day-a-week dad”*

# The role of extra-statutory occupational benefits in enabling shared parenting in the UK?

- Will employers match shared parental leave to maternity leave (e.g. full pay)? If not, take up likely to be very low.
- Gender pay gap in reverse – a leave pay gap

Also:

- What about entitlements for the self-employed?
- What about the gap between take up between high and low income groups?

# Fathers in the early years: How do they balance their work and family life?

- Scottish Government publication
- <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00477645.pdf>

<http://www.yearofthedad.org> -

coming in 2016



**YEAR  
OF THE  
DAD**